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19 January 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Meeting with the Attorney General of the United States Concerning Cuba

1. I attended a meeting on Cuba at 11:00 A. M., today chaired by the Attorney General. Others present were:

Brig. General E. S. Lansdale (OSD)
Major James Patchell (OSD)
Brig. General William H. Craig (JCS)
Mr. [REDACTED] (CIA)
Mr. George McManus (CIA)
(The Department of State was not represented although invited.)

2. The Attorney General outlined to us "How it all started", findings as they developed, and the general framework within which the United States Government should now attack the Cuban problem. Briefly, these were the main points:

- (a) After failure of the invasion, the United States Government became less active on the theory "better to lay low".
- (b) Over the months the complexion of the refugee flow changed (i.e. upper classes out first, then middle classes -- dropping to lower middle class, etc.) which, he stated, indicated a strong feeling of opposition to Castro within Cuba.
- (c) Progress in Cuba toward a police and Communist state was more rapid during this period than that made by any country in Eastern Europe in an equivalent period of time. Because of the rapidity of advance, immediate action on the part of the United States Government was necessary.

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- (d) With these factors in mind, the Attorney General had a discussion at the White House during the autumn of 1961 with the President, the Secretary of Defense, and General Lansdale. The Secretary of Defense assigned General Lansdale to survey the Cuban problem, and he (Lansdale) reported to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Attorney General (in late November) concluding:

- (1) Overthrow of Castro regime was possible
- (2) Sugar crop should be attacked at once
- (3) Action to be taken to keep Castro so busy with internal problems (economic, political, and social) that Castro would have no time for meddling abroad especially in Latin America.

DETAIL: United States Government was precluded from destroying the current sugar crop (1) we were late and overly optimistic and (b) "the assets of the United States Government were not as great as we were led to believe".

- (e) Accordingly, a solution to the Cuban problem today carries "The top priority in the United States Government -- all else is secondary -- no time, money, effort, or manpower is to be spared. There can be no misunderstanding on the involvement of the agencies concerned nor on their responsibility to carry out this job. The agency heads understand that you are to have full backing on what you need."
- (f) Yesterday (18 January 1962), the President indicated to the Attorney General that "the final chapter on Cuba has not been written" -- it's got to be done and will be done.
- (g) Therefore, the Attorney General directed those in attendance at the meeting to address

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themselves to the "32 tasks" unflinchingly (see program review - The Cuba Project dated 18 January 1962). He said, "It is not only General Lansdale's job to put the tasks, but yours to carry out with every resource at your command."

3. The Attorney General inquired about the progress in establishing a refugee interrogation center at Miami and was informed that this would be in operation by 15 February 1962 -- the target date. With respect to interrogating the back-log of Cubans in the U. S. A., we agreed that we would attack this problem by getting at the more recent arrivals first. The Attorney General was informed that one could not relate, in time, the establishment of an interrogation facility with the placing of agents in Cuba -- in other words, a body of information would have to be developed by intensive interrogation of many sources over a period of time.

4. It was General Lansdale's view that there were several tasks among the "32" outlined upon which action could be taken without awaiting this detailed intelligence information. He noted, for example, the defection of top Cubans as being within the immediate capabilities of the CIA.

RM
Richard Helms
Chief of Operations, DD/P